

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 4, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I am withholding my approval from S. 3943, a bill "to extend the time for using funds appropriated to carry out the 1973 Rural Environmental Assistance Program and the 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program."

The bill would extend from December 31, 1974, to December 31, 1975, the time within which farmers may request and receive approval of cost-sharing assistance under the 1973 Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP) and the 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program (RECP). In total, this bill would make \$125,000,000 available to farmers for water and soil conservation practices which would otherwise not be available beyond December 31, 1974.

In my judgment, this bill is not necessary because sufficient cost-share funds have been made available for producers to finance sound conservation practices. Those producers interested in these programs have had adequate time to request and receive approval of these cost-share funds by the end of December 1974. I understand that those farmers, who have started approved conservation practices during the allotted time and were unable to complete them because of weather or other uncontrollable circumstances, will be permitted to complete these practices and receive cost-sharing assistance during 1975.

This Administration shares the view that REAP and RECP have made important contributions to conservation and the rural environment. However, the programs have long ago achieved their objectives. These programs were initiated in the 1930's to supplement farmers' incomes and provide incentives to farmers to install soil and water conservation practices. They were successful in demonstrating the value of conservation as a good farming practice. Many of the practices supported by the programs are profitable without Federal assistance and the supplementary income from this source has diminished in importance at a time when net farm income is near an all-time high.

It is, therefore, my earnest opinion that this bill is both unnecessary and unjustified, and on that basis I withhold my approval.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
JANUARY 3, 1975

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